the Independent
May 22-28, 1996

©Greg Worthen

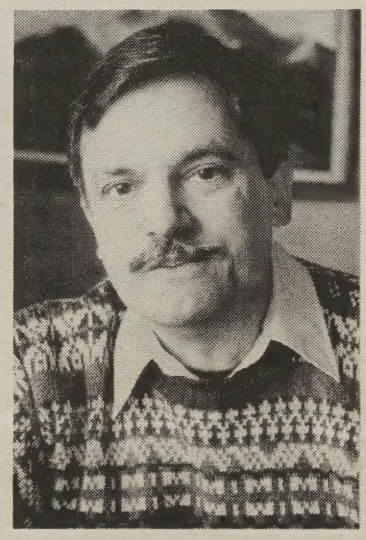
Galvanized Gays

Campaign to undo 2 unites a community

When a little-known but well-organized group charged out of obscurity five summers ago to launch the campaign that became Amendment 2, few local gays and lesbians appreciated the significance of what was happening.

"Our goal is not to arouse hatred, but in fact to extend a hand of hope to gays," Tony Marco (right) said in calmly announcing a ballot initiative that would bar "special rights" for homosexuals.

By Cate Terwilliger



©Jean Corbea

It was July 31, 1991, and neither Marco nor Kevin Tebedo and Will Perkins — his cronies in the nascent Colorado for Family Values — could anticipate the irony of that statement. Nor could local gays and lesbians, who responded to CFV by coming out of the closet in unprecedented numbers.

A hand of hope.

"I see Amendment 2 as one of the most positive things that has ever happened to our [gay] community," says Maggie Abrams, owner of Abrams Jewelry Design in Old Colorado City.

"I've seen tremendous growth in the community," says Julie Cooper, associate director of Ground Zero, which was born in the weeks after Coloradans approved Amendment 2. "I've watched it grow from scared little closeted people to really strong, determined members."

Tebedo refuses to validate such growth, which he attributes mostly to militant gay outsiders he says moved to Colorado Springs. If gays seem more visible and vocal, it's because of "the pathology of homosexuality," Tebedo says. "When the homosexual finds out somebody doesn't like them, instead of tending to shy away from them, the belligerent ones tend to get in your face."

He calls gays and lesbians a "duplicitous, dishonest lobby" willing to rape children and do violence to those who stand in their way. Still, Tebedo says, "the American people will never accept homosexuality — no matter how much the queers want them to."

'A whole new face'

But there's ample evidence to suggest gays have gained, if not acceptance, breathing room in conservative Colorado Springs: a large Pride Center that houses several gay and lesbian groups; Ground Zero, which mails 850 copies of its monthly newspaper; the blossoming of gay-supportive groups like Citizens Project and PFLAG; the publication of the city's first directory of gay-friendly businesses; a thriving gay church congregation; annual gay pride parades; and hundreds of bright blue "Celebrate Diversity" bumper stickers now curling and peeling with age.

"There's a whole new face on the gay community that wasn't there before Amendment 2, and that I think is providing good role models," says advertising executive Bruce Pfrommer.

It's a far cry from the summer of '91, when gays were still stinging from ugly debates over a proposed city human-rights ordinance that included them; the measure eventually was gutted and beaten, along with the Human Relations Commission that supported it.

Those responsible for its defeat helped birth CFV, which had quietly and efficiently started fund raising before most people knew it existed. On its advisory board was former U.S. Sen. Bill Armstrong, who, a month after CFV pledged to take the high road, wrote a fund-raising letter graphically portraying homosexuals as aberrant, promiscuous and "tragically misguided."

As grim as things looked at home, few gays thought a measure banning civil-rights protections statewide had any chance of passing.

"I had disregarded Amendment 2 because the polls had said we were fine," says Chris Lee, who with long-time partner John Roberts owns Firefly Antiques in Manitou Springs. "I was absolutely shocked when the amendment passed."

Retired geography professor Jackie Beyer also was caught off guard. "I think we all, up until the night we sat in Poor Richard's and watched the returns, thought the people of Colorado wouldn't do what they did."

Continued on page 12

Amendment 2: What It Said

No Protected Status Based on Homosexual, Lesbian or Bisexual Orientation. *Neither the state of Colorado, through any of its branches or departments, nor any of its agencies, political subdivisions, municipalities or school districts, shall enact, adopt or enforce any statute, regulation, ordinance or policy whereby homosexual, lesbian or bisexual orientation, conduct, practices or relationships shall constitute or otherwise be the basis of, or entitle any person or class of persons to have or claim any minority status, quota preferences, protected status or claim of discrimination. This section of the Constitution shall be in all respects self-executing.*

Amendment 2 was adopted by Colorado voters on Nov. 3, 1992, but quickly was challenged on the grounds that it violated the Equal Protection Clause of the federal Constitution. On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed, throwing out the measure on a 6-3 vote. Amendment 2 never took effect.

Media by Cara DeGette

News 13-a-go-round

Dan Dennison refuses to be kicked down

AFTER ONLY EIGHT MONTHS ON THE JOB, KRDO Channel 13 news director Dan Dennison has abruptly resigned, the latest departure from what has become a veritable revolving door at the station.

Dennison quit last Monday. He said his bosses told him during an unexpected review that they were dissatisfied with his performance as a manager and a leader and were unhappy with the quality of the newscast and "essentially everything" he was doing.

Dennison said the station managers offered no specifics, or suggestions for improvements. Then, he said, they threatened to fire him if changes were not made.

"I made the decision [to quit] after a [weekend] of gut-wrenching and soul searching. I couldn't operate efficiently or effectively with that onus over my head," he said, calling his departure "the most painful decision I ever made in my life."

"It's a mystery to me, it really is. It's a mystery to all the people who worked for me and for everyone at the television station," Dennison said. "But in my heart, I decided this was a place that I need to take a stand."

Dennison refused to discuss KRDO controversies that have surfaced in recent months, including claims by scores of former Channel 13 employees that upper management often dictates what makes news and what doesn't in their daily broadcasts.

Those reporters and on-air personalities — all of whom have moved on to much larger broadcast markets since their KRDO employment — reported that during their tenure at Channel 13, they were required to cover stories with little news value. In the Feb. 28 *Independent*, former employees also detailed news stories they said were either killed or slanted to the bias of station owners Harry Hoth, his daughter Patti Hoth and station manager Neil Klockziem.

©Lisa Murphy

A quick escape: Former KRDO news director Dan Dennison quit his job, claiming events surrounding his departure were "bizarre, truly bizarre."

Former anchor Laura Emerson likened her Channel 13 experience to hanging her journalistic integrity on a peg every time she walked through KRDO's door.

Emerson declined to renew her contract and was subsequently fired last year. Popular sports director Brian Jerman also was fired, as was reporter Julie Aguirre Robinson, who was dismissed after she reportedly refused to purchase a car for her personal use from longtime KRDO advertiser Will Perkins. Many former Channel 13 anchors, reporters, photographers and other news staff report low pay and a quest for larger market exposure inspire them to quickly move on. Dennison's is not the only recent resignation; anchor Stacey Allen and assignment editor Lance Enger also have announced their resignations.

©Lisa Murphy

The revolving door for departing Channel 13 broadcast journalists just keeps spinning.

The Hoth's and Klockziem did not return messages seeking comment on Dennison's resignation and continuing high turnover at the station.

Dennison said he preferred to accentuate the positive, offering praise to his colleagues and employees, who he said have made "tremendous progress" over the past few months.

A widely respected, award-winning broadcast journalist with 25 years experience, Dennison covered the Western Slope for nearly 14 years for Denver's Channel 9. He said he isn't worried about his future and is working as a part-time photographer for KOAA Channel 5/30 until he lines up another management position.

Dennison's departure left his news team and broadcast colleagues around the state stunned — but not particularly surprised.

Dennison's job as news director was to oversee newsroom operations and to visualize and implement new broadcast techniques. At the same time, Dennison answered to the Hoth's and Klockziem. He said that when he accepted the job, it was clear he would have a "free hand" to operate the newsroom

"I operate very independently," he said.

Dennison's efforts caught the attention of former KRDO employee David Brodie, now the news producer of Channel 9 in Denver. Brodie still lives in Colorado Springs and said he regularly tuned in to Channel 13 to watch Dennison's progress.

"He was trying to bring a jazzier look to the place. KRDO was getting into the swing of things, and Dan was bringing it into the 1990s," Brodie said. "He was in there trying to shake things up in a positive way."

Colorado Springs is the 97th largest broadcast market in the country, and KRDO consistently lags behind competitors KKTV and KOAA in the Neilsen ratings. Brodie said broadcast journalism in the Pikes Peak region is at a "very critical juncture" because of the area's tremendous growth. Dennison's departure could result in a major sidestep for KRDO, Brodie said.

But former KRDO reporter Chris Berg, who is now an assignment editor at Channel 7 in Denver, said he has a pretty good idea of the person KRDO will hire to replace Dennison. And it won't, he said, be someone willing to shake up the status quo.

"KRDO's reputation across the country is that they don't believe in a strong newscast — they are more interested in getting non-news on TV," Berg said. "Nothing has changed in 50 years at that station. Why would it change with one person?" ⚡

Colorado Springs Spring Singles Quiz

QUESTION:

Where is the best place to meet quality singles in this area?

Choose only one: (Multiple choice – don't be confused by trick answers!)

1. Nightclubs & bars
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3. At work
4. Matchmaking services
5. Newspaper, television, telephone 900 want ads
6. Singles library

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2. Not enough choices or information about members in theses groups.
3. If the romance fizzles, you still have to work together.
4. Your friends can fix you up on blind dates for free. See #1.
5. A scary proposition because sometimes descriptions are deceiving. See #1 again.
6. Correct! Quality singles choose the people they wish to meet by comparing lifestyles, interests, values and compatibility with our Personal Choice Library System.

594-6100

Continued from page 10

'We've got to get out of here'

The vote was 813,966 to 710,151. Amendment 2 had passed.

"I remember lying in bed thinking, 'We've got to get out of here, we've got to get out of here,' " recalls businesswoman Alicia Edwards.

Many gays spoke of leaving; some did. Others went deeper into the closet.

"Coming out is a journey, and the message that Amendment 2 sent to some people was really halting on that journey," Pfrommer says. "It scared a lot of people to death."

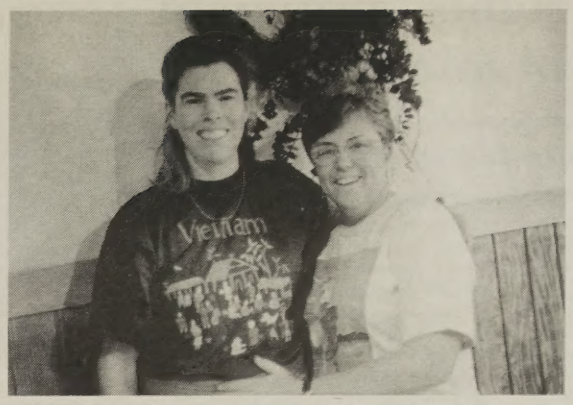
"No one ever can take away the unity that developed in the gay community, and also in the community of their extended families."

— *Eva McGeehan*

For Marty Booker, 26, the statement was literal; dying of AIDS, he killed himself the day after the election. "I refuse to live in a state where a few people can, at will, make my life a living hell," Booker wrote in his suicide note. "Thanks to CFV, hell was delivered to my very front door!"

But for most, the despair was short-lived. Within 10 days of the election, a suit challenging Amendment 2 was filed in Denver District Court. And a growing minority of Colorado Springs gays came to life with a ferocity that surprised even themselves.

Pfrommer was among many who took a quantum leap personally and professionally. "It was definitely outrage, and it took that sense of comfort away," he says. "I felt like now was the time to make sure something was happening." Pfrommer gave his first media interview while attending a national gay-rights conference not long after Amendment 2 passed; he was quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* and *Denver Post*. A day later he told his boss he was gay, inspiring a lesbian colleague to do the same.



"We both felt to live a lie and to live in fear was something that we couldn't do anymore," says Maggie Abrams (right), with Jenny Hickman, her partner of seven years.

Edwards, who had lived a deeply closeted life, overnight became a compensatory activist who couldn't do enough. "I went to two or three meetings a day sometimes," she says. "I was a maniac for months after that. I think part of it was the culmination of 12 or 14 years of having been really closeted, and realizing really suddenly that it [Amendment 2] was a real threat, that it wasn't just talk …

"I think I will always be active in some manner politically forevermore because of what happened around Amendment 2. It just profoundly changed my direction."

For Cooper, the epiphany was more personal than political. A long-time feminist activist, she found herself thrust into the position of state co-chair of the Equal Protection Campaign (EPOC), a group formed to battle the initiative before the election. "At the time, I considered myself a straight woman," says Cooper. That changed during the months she worked closely with the half-dozen lesbians who formed EPOC's core in Colorado Springs.

"The women who became politically active in EPOC were people of incredible strength who were very willing to take personal risks for the bigger picture," she recalls. As it turned out, Cooper, too, was a risk-taker, eventually coming out on the spur of the moment to herself — and a national audience — on *The Jane Whitney Show*.

"Afterwards, I thought, 'Gee, maybe I ought to call my mom,' " Cooper recalls.

'No risk was too great'

The passage of Amendment 2 had a less dramatic but equally profound effect on those who were less closeted. Shaken by what they had heard at public hearings on the

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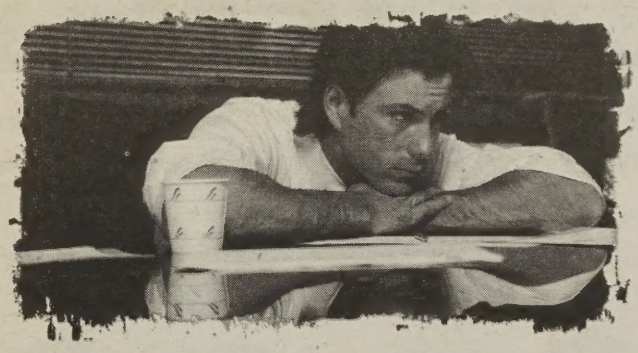

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Planting trees where landmines used to be.

'No special rights' argument split local minorities

By Cate Terwilliger

From the beginning, Colorado for Family Values sold Amendment 2 to state voters as a defensive buffer against "special rights" for homosexuals.

"Civil rights have historically been granted on the basis of characteristics of birth such as race, color, gender, national origin or being physically handicapped," said then-CFV co-chair Tony Marco in announcing the initiative. "If having sex becomes all it takes to be considered 'ethnic,' with full minority rights and privileges, the concept of ethnicity will have lost nearly all its meaning and value."

CFV Chairman Will Perkins returned to that theme this week, denouncing the day of the Supreme Court ruling that killed Amendment 2 as "a chilling day for America's ethnic minorities. ... Their hard-won legal remedies, carved out on the basis of unchangeable ethnic traits, have now been diluted to include people's choice of bed partners."

In 1992, the idea that gays were trying to horn in on the hard-won protections of "legitimate" minorities found some currency among voters, who approved Amendment 2 by a 53 percent margin statewide.

But the argument split those it targeted. Many minority-group members saw it simply as a shrewd divide-and-conquer tactic; others couldn't help but agree, albeit with reservations. Considering its source within the Religious Right — not historically known for its pursuit of civil rights — the notion was hard to accept lock, stock and barrel.

"Basically, what we saw was conservative people posing as civil-rights activists in order to promote their anti-lesbian, anti-gay agenda," says Ruben Martinez, who chaired the Human Relations Commission as it crafted the doomed 1991 city human-rights ordinance that included sexual orientation. "That's the tactic of the conservatives to this day."

But Perkins says CFV was responding to gays who, in the months preceding Amendment 2, increasingly "took advantage" of a perspective aligning them with traditional minorities. "We recognized the fact that the homosexual proponents were desperately trying to equate their sexual conduct with ethnicity, and they have consistently tried to equate the discrimination that they claim to experience as being the same thing that primarily African-Americans experienced in the '50s and '60s. ...

"As they say down in Texas, that dog won't hunt."

Former U.S. Sen. Bill Armstrong laid out the distinction in an indignant Aug. 27, 1991 CFV fundraising letter: "To equate the self-created personal miseries of pleasure-addicted gays — who sport average incomes of nearly $55,500 a year — with the innocent sufferings and crippling poverty of legitimate minority groups is an insult to those who've struggled to achieve true civil rights in America."

Few local gays are graced by paychecks as generous as those Armstrong suggested; those who are typically trade openness for prosperity. "If gay people come out, there are a whole lot of things they're going to lose in life," says a local black lesbian businesswoman. But, she added, the fact that gays have a choice about openness — and therefore, discrimination — means they *don't* face the same barriers as racial minorities.

> **"Basically, what we saw was conservative people posing as civil-rights activists in order to promote their anti-lesbian, anti-gay agenda."**
> **— *Ruben Martinez***

"When people want to put that together, I think I feel used," she says. "If I was just coming from the view of a black [straight] person, I would feel that someone [gay] was using the struggle, especially if they were white. They don't know anything. They move through the world white; they have white privileges."

A "minority" of blacks believe gays want special rights, says Kevin Gillis, a black gay man. Kristina Cade, Gillis' friend and a straight black woman, says black men in particular are unwilling to empathize with gays. "Most of the people I know that are black women, they understand," Cade says. "Most of the black men I know, they're homophobic. ... I think they're still struggling with their own sexuality."

Leaders of the Hispanic community, too, labored to reach consensus. "Minorities are minorities," Martinez says. "It doesn't have to do with categorical definitions, but with whether or not people are discriminated against."

The issue was less clear-cut to the local Chicano Unity Council, which went on record opposing Amendment 2 despite the objections of members who found the "no special rights" argument convincing.

"It was contentious," says Luis Cortez, a Pikes Peak Community College counselor present at the vote. "Those of us who were opposing Amendment 2 were basing our argument on the issue of human rights, rather than special rights."

Cortez says gays' failure to join battles against measures targeting traditional minorities made those groups less likely to run to their aid during the Amendment 2 campaign. "The gay and lesbian community was not jumping on the bandwagon, for example, on the official English thing, and on fighting the battle of affirmative action," Cortez says.

Nonetheless, he added, "they suffer the same kinds of things that we suffer, but from a different cultural perspective. ... Discrimination, prejudice, racism or homophobia is the same. It's based on hatred of difference, and the non-respect of diversity." ▼

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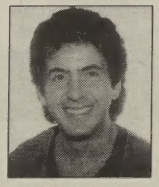
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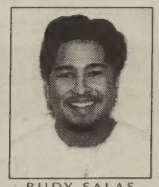
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human-rights ordinance, some had already made the decision to be more vocal.

With the encouragement of Jenny Hickman, her partner of seven years, Maggie Abrams put their West Side business on the line. "Both Jenny and I realized that if we didn't stand up and do something, it wasn't ever going to get any better than it was," she recalls. "One thing we immediately did was take a stand about saying things that we felt, and we put those on the window in the store. .., We began to put literature out that told about the gay and lesbian community; we started wearing [political] buttons.

"We both felt to live a lie and to live in fear was something that we couldn't do anymore," Abrams says. "Even though we were risking our business, we felt so strongly about that that no risk was too great."

While regular customers responded positively to their new openness, a handful of strangers harassed the two women. One man stood in front of the store telling people Abrams and Hickman were lesbians who raped children. Others sent hate letters and graphic pornography, and painted crosses on the shop's windows and door with motor oil. One summer, Abrams says, a group of teens from Manitou Springs-based Summit Ministries came into the store to quote scripture and tell the two women they were going to "burn in the fires of hell."

"Amendment 2 has made us feel that it is really necessary ... to get involved," says Chris Lee (right) with long-time partner John Roberts.

Now, as the couple awaits the birth of their first child, Abrams says she "never, never" regretted the decision to be more open. "I've become a much stronger person," she says. "I think my self-esteem has zoomed way out of sight. It has made me more aware that there is a big, loving community of gays and lesbians, and that we all need each other and want each other."

Lee and Roberts, too, say the election deepened their political commitment. "Amendment 2 was a catalyst for us," Lee says. "Previously, we hadn't been involved in the gay community that much. Amendment 2 has made us feel that it is really necessary for gay people to get involved, and for straight people who see the plight of gay people to get involved."

'Here I sat with a gay son ...'

Eva McGeehan had heard people condemning homosexuals; as the mother of a gay son, she always took them to task. But it wasn't until 1991 that the local chapter of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) took root, giving co-founder McGeehan and others like her a place to support each other and their children.

"I had encountered gay-bashing, and it hurt terribly, but I spoke up to people who gay-bashed," she says. "You feel so frustrated, you feel so bad your heart breaks, that's what happens. ... PFLAG was a way to formally say, 'This isn't OK.' "

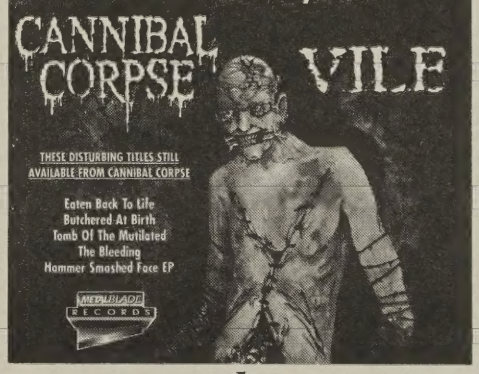
Anti-gay rhetoric surrounding Colorado Springs' failed human-rights ordinance and, later, Amendment 2, brought together a diverse group of parents — including evangelical Christians — who perceived their children as under attack. "The best thing that ever happened to our group was Amendment 2, there's no question about it," McGeehan says. "I would say our membership has probably quadrupled, because these parents said, 'Enough, already,' and Amendment 2 brought them out of the closet."

With regular meetings and an established membership of about 100, the group has outlived Amendment 2 and has a promising future, McGeehan says. "No one ever can take away the unity that developed in the gay community, and also in the community of their extended families."

It's a common sentiment. After years of testimony and injunctions and rulings and appeals, the most important effect of Amendment 2 on local gays and their allies was not the courts' to decide.

"We joke about it," Cooper says, "but it's like, 'Thank you, Kevin and Will, because without you, we would not be the community we are today.' " ▼

There's only one word to describe Cannibal Corpse. And that word is...VILE. The latest slab of sickness from Bob Dole's arch nemesis hits the streets on May 21st.



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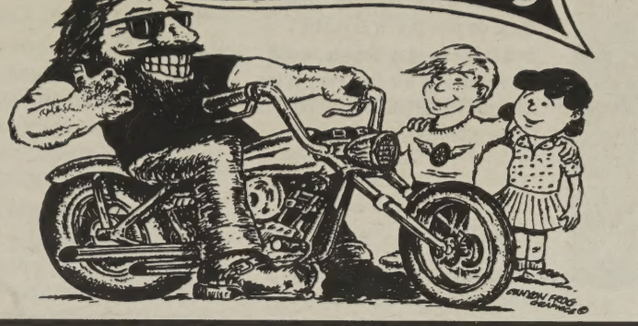

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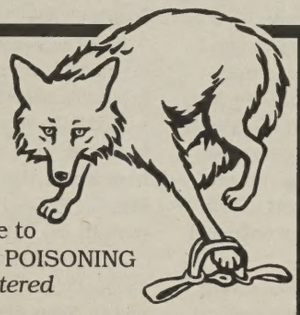

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CFV takes its message on the road and into the courtroom

Cara DeGette

Amendment 2 has been declared unconstitutional by the country's highest court, but the spirit of Colorado for Family Values' intent to restrict gays and lesbians from seeking protected class status lives on in every state in the country.

Since Amendment 2 passed in 1992, CFV has sponsored annual seminars in Colorado Springs, offering representatives from anti-gay groups across the country techniques to successfully pass similar legislation. The organization's continued activism to assist other groups has led to accusations that the non-profit is illegally operating as a Political Action Committee.

In separate lawsuits filed in Ohio and Colorado, CFV has been accused of violating Federal Election Campaign requirements and of failing to disclose contribution reports. The non-profit has continued to resist court rulings that require disclosure of its financial supporters.

> **"If the law says that we're supposed to »[disclose the names of supporters], then we will. But it kind of inhibits your free speech, in a sense."**
> ***— attorney Martin Kuhn who represents Colorado for Family Values***

Colorado Attorney General Gale Norton estimated state taxpayers spent about $420,000 to defend Amendment 2. But it is anybody's guess what the final cost of litigation will be when CFV's other court battles — in Colorado and Ohio — are tallied.

Soon after Amendment 2 passed, CFV obtained its 501(c)4 non-profit status with the Internal Revenue Service. That means that while the organization can indulge in political lobbying and education efforts, it is not supposed to contribute to political campaigns.

Colorado Springs attorney Martin Kuhn, who sits on the board of CFV and volunteers his legal work for the organization, calls CFV's battle to protect its campaign contributors a "matter of principle."

"If the law says that we're supposed to [disclose the names of supporters], then we will," Kuhn said. "But it kind of inhibits your free speech, in a sense."

In Ohio, CFV was accused of failing to disclose the names of donors whose contributions were forwarded to a Cincinnati group working to pass an Amendment-2-like law there in 1993. CFV contributed $390,000 to the successful campaign.

The amount represented more than 75 percent of the Ohio group's entire budget, and more than CFV had spent to pass Amendment 2 in Colorado. Suspecting the money had been essentially "laundered" through CFV by an Ohio donor who wished to remain anonymous, the publisher of an Ohio gay newspaper subsequently sued in an effort to discover where CFV's donated money had originated.

"We determined that CFV is a Political Action Committee and had failed to register and report in Ohio," said attorney Don McTigue, who is handling the case.

But under Ohio law, CFV cannot be forced to disclose money contributed to its Cincinnati counterpart, called Equal Rights Not Special Rights. When subpoenaed, officers of that group invoked the Fifth Amendment and refused to cooperate, McTigue said. The Federal Election Committee last week issued a decision last week rejecting the Ohio anti-gay activists' attempts to seek refuge under the Fifth Amendment, he said.

"The real goal is to force CFV to file as a Political Action Committee to find out where their money was being funneled from," he said.

In another lawsuit, Colorado gay activist Daniel Brewer-Ward sued CFV in an effort to force the Colorado Springs organization to disclose contributors to its Amendment 2 "Legal Defense Fund" set up in 1993.

After Amendment 2 passed, Brewer-Ward launched a brief and unsuccessful initiative campaign to repeal the law. About the same time, CFV Chairman Will Perkins appealed to supporters to help raise $1 million for legal aid. Brewer-Ward accused CFV of violating its non-profit status by operating as a Political Action Committee.

A lower court agreed, and ordered CFV to file a PAC organization report with the Secretary of State and disclose its contributors, said Colorado Deputy Attorney General Maurice Knaizer.

CFV attorney Kuhn plans to appeal the case to the Colorado Court of Appeals this month. He said Brewer-Ward's complaint was based on a vague reference made by Will Perkins in a fundraising letter that was not intended to initiate a formal political organization.

"Sometimes you have to be extra careful about what you say, because you could be deemed a Political Action Committee," Kuhn said. ▼